

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 CU-02 /058 W

-----075500 241446Z /47

R 241125Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4298

USIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 9037

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR IN

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

L. K. ADVANI

1. FOLLOWING UP ON COURTESY CALL TO MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING JUNE 15 BY AMBASSADOR AND CPAO, ACTING CPAO, VOLSPKR JOHN MERRILL AND NIB CHIEF CALLED ON MINISTER ADVANI JUNE 22. WITH AMBASSADOR HE HAD EMPHASIZED FULL RESTORATION OF PRESS FREEDOM BY THE JANATA GOVERNMENT AND ITS RESTORATION OF PRESS FREEDOM BY THE JANATA GOVERNMENT AND ITS REPUDIATION OF USES OF THE PRESS (INCLUDING VIDEO AND TV) IN WAYS UNFAIR TO OPPOSING PARTIES. IN SECOND MEETING THE DISCUSSION INCLUDED BRIEF SURVEY OF PRESS CONDITIONS IN INDIA, NEWS AGENCIES, TELEVISION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION. ADVANI EMPHASIZED DRAMATIC CHANGES SINCE THE END OF THE EMERGENCY AND SPOKE OF SIGNIFICANT RISE IN NEWS-PAPER CIRCULATION RESULTING FROM FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION.

2. COMMENTING ON TV EXPANSION, MINISTER ADVANI SAID THERE IS LITTLE HOPE FOR RAPID GROWTH OF INDIA TV UNLESS INDIAN TV SATELLITE PROJECT SUCCEEDS. HE FRANKLY EMPHASIZED THAT NO TV EXPANSION COULD BE EXPECTED IF MEDIUM LIMITED TO URBAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELITE. RURAL AUDIENCES HAVE PRIORITY IN EXPANSION PLANS.

3. RESPONDING TO QUERY ON ACCESSIBILITY BY FOREIGN JOURNALISTS TO INDIA LEADERS, ADVANI SPOKE OF LONG HISTORY OF EASY ACCESS FOR RESPONSIBLE FOREIGN JOURNALISTS TO ALL INDIAN LEADERS. HE WONDERED ABOUT POLICY HE UNDERSTANDS GOVERNS WHITE HOUSE PRESS CONFERENCES WHICH PROHIBITS FOREIGN

JOURNALISTS FROM PUTTING QUESTIONS TO US PRESIDENT. MINISTER ASKED FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING THIS POLICY, AND IF SUCH POLICY STEMS FROM OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT MANDATE OR WHITE HOUSE PRESS CORPS CUSTOM. POST WOULD APPRECIATE DETAILS AND HISTORY OF THIS POLICY TO BE PASSED ON TO MINISTER ADVANI..

4. COMMENTING ON FUTURE OF NEWS AGENCIES IN INDIA, ADVANI SAID HIS MINISTRY EXPECTS SHORTLY TO RECEIVE RESULTS OF STUDY NOW UNDERWAY ON THE SUBJECT. GOI DECISION, HE SAID, WOULD BE MADE AFTER THAT STUDY HAS BEEN REVIEWED.

5. MINISTER ADVANI VOICED INTEREST IN SUBJECT OF PRESS OMBUDSMAN AND WONDERED IF US HAD UNDER CONSIDERATION AN OFFICIAL PRESS OR MEDIA OMBUDSMAN. HE SAID INDIAN PRESS CORPS PUSHING TO ESTABLISH THIS OFFICE IN INDIA AND THE SUBJECT WAS UNDER DISCUSSION. MINISTER ALSO EXPRESSED CURIOSITY ON THE AMERICAN FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AND HOW IT HAS WORKED OUT. MINISYRT INTERESTED IN DEALS OF LATEST ASSESSMENTS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS LEGISLATION AND PROBLEMS INVOLVED.

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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